

HOW CAN WE INTEGRATE THE STANDARDS-BASED CURRICULUM INTO THE ID4T MODEL?

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Chapter Questions

1. What are standards and why do you think we have them?
2. How is the standards movement different from constructivism, user-design, and inquiry learning?
3. Does this definition and motivation for using standards differ from what you thought standards were? If it does, in what ways?
4. What are the components of the standards-based classroom? Are there some you would add?
5. Do you think that the ID model will work in a standards-based classroom? Why?/why not?
6. How do you think you would approach standards-based ID4T in your classroom?

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And now for something completely different! Running almost counter to all of the prior alternatives to the traditional ID4T model that we have discussed (constructivist classrooms, user-design, and inquiry learning) thus far, is the standards movement. Because of the politically charged nature of standards, we'll take up a brief discussion of the movement as a whole here. The standards movement most succinctly defined is primarily a political effort to ensure accountability in the classroom by specifying very clear learning goals and outcomes. Formalized by the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, standards-based classrooms live with mandated standards

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that each child must meet in order to be considered on grade level. However, the standards movement started long before NCLB. Buttram & Waters (1997) wrote,

With the publication of the *Nation at risk* report, elected officials and policymakers began demanding that educators be held accountable for results. This switch in emphasis (from input to results) set the stage for the delineation of standards, or what students should know and be able to do . . . Elected officials and policy makers see standards-based education as a powerful tool for improving the outcomes of public education for students. (p. 2)

Buttram & Waters point to the positive outcomes of communities determining what standards would be in their schools, or disciplines negotiating what would be required of learners at different levels. "This process of identifying and setting standards helps clarify the goals and expectations for the educational program . . . Once standards are set, teachers can focus and organize their curriculum and instruction to help all students meet standards" (p. 3). The standards, according to Buttram & Waters (1997), can give a great deal of clarity to the process, help to identify the needed resources, and hold everyone accountable for specific outcomes. This prioritization can create a situation where "what gets made into a standard gets done" (p. 3).

The reason standards-based education is significantly different from the prior three innovations is that it falls out of step with the student-oriented innovations of constructivism, user-design, and inquiry-based learning. This movement is motivated much more politically than through research on what is thought to be the best for learning and learners. Standards and accountability are a very politically popular movement. The notion that all learners would reach certain levels of proficiency is laudable, but perhaps not altogether friendly to motivating learning . . . it's more of a stick than a carrot. It also closely prescribes teaching behavior. Lofty (2003) has written of literacy standards, "Because the literacy hour describes what is to be taught, prescribes the means and rigidly allocates the time, the literacy hour arguably restricts teachers' work more than any previous initiative" (p. 203). He argues rather for the definitions of all fields to come from those who are experienced teachers from within disciplines such as English.

Similarly, Kohn (2001) argues that standards and the tests that come with them will disempower teachers and local communities:

The effect of mandated standards has been not only to control teachers, but to usurp the power of local school districts to chart their own course. If there ever has been a more profoundly undemocratic school reform movement in US educational history than what is taking place in the name of standards, I haven't heard of it. (p. 5)

However, there are plenty of advocates on the other side of the standards question. Wilson (1996) wrote,

There is something certain in a standard. There seems little harm in being certain. Certainty promotes an order that allows us to focus on other issues . . . It is comforting to think we can improve our schools by setting explicit standards for what we want our youth to know and be. (p. 223)

Regardless, standards are now a facet of the American education system and are not likely to go anywhere soon. While they may not make a lot of sense within the more learner-centered foci that have emerged from research of the past 20 years in learning and learning sciences, standards are an important political movement that has taken hold in classrooms all over public schools in America.

What Are the Components of a Standards-Based Classroom?

- Carefully prescribed content.
- Specific thresholds established for proficient performance at all grade levels.
- State mandated and approved tests.
- Expectations are closely linked to performance.
- All students must be individually checked on all expectations.
- Starts with the standards for the curriculum base.
- Does not specify very much in terms of sequence, activities, or media.
- Outcomes are determined, the means to get there are left open.

Then how is it that we are to utilize the ID4T model in a standards-based classroom? It is quite different actually from either a traditional classroom (the original presentation of the model) or any of the learner-centered classroom approaches. Before approaching the ID4T model in a standards-based classroom, the first step is to determine what phase in the standards process you are faced with. Typically the standards will have already been set. But knowing the general outline of the standards is different from having a complete set of standards explicated by the school board. Are there texts that share the specific standards and what is meant by each of them? (These are often difficult to read tomes.) Have the tests already been set? For the purposes of this illustration we'll assume that the standards are set, the tests are ready, and the outcomes have been explicitly detailed in texts for the teacher. But we'll also assume that the sequence and the means for accomplishing these standards haven't yet been set.

Set Learning Goals and Objectives

In the standards-based classroom this is usually relatively easy. The standards usually explicate a goal and objectives. Sometimes these goals are not as clear or useful for the classroom as they could be. At times the objectives will not include all the relevant parts (condition, behavior, and criterion) that you'll need. So you'll want to critically review the goals and objectives before using them in your own lesson. Note that one way to tell more precisely what a vaguely worded standard may be asking your learners to accomplish is to carefully check any assessments that are provided to you. You may be able to extrapolate the goal and/or objectives from the assessments.

Create Authentic Testing

Likewise, it is probable that your tests are already set to meet the standards. The primary problem with the testing in most standards-based programs is that they tend not to be authentic or performance based. This is in direct contrast to the best advice we have from standards experts. Wilson (1996) makes an excellent link to the notion that

we should measure performance, which is in clear agreement with the concept that we should align learning and testing: "Standards of learning are not successfully imposed by edict. They are not minimal standards. They are not separate from performance" (p. 24). In the same vein, Ravitch (1995), a pre-eminent expert in standards, wrote,

The customary method of testing in the classroom should be performance assessment, not multiple choice tests. Students should be expected to demonstrate that they can apply what they have learned. Students should know that they will be expected to write essays, perform scientific experiments, engage in debates about historical issues, and exhibit in a variety of ways what they have learned. (p. 183)

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Educators need to examine the tests critically and, if they are required tests, be sure to supplement the tests if they are inauthentic or misaligned with the real learning goals and objectives.

Assess Student Characteristics and Entry Level Behaviors

It will be impossible for learners to accomplish their grade level standards if there are gaps in their past learning or skills that are required before they learn the new skills. Thus, as in past examples, it is essential that care be taken to assure prerequisites are in place in a standards-based classroom. As with inquiry learning, when standards are being used, particularly in high stakes situations, it is imperative that care be taken to assure that prerequisite skills have been attained and are firmly in place. Pre-tests and surveys are better than more informal methods that may work in traditional, constructivist, or user-design situations.

Analyze and Select Available Texts

Due to the relatively prescribed nature of standards-based learning, the texts are likely to have already been assigned and pre-determined. However, you may find that the texts are inadequate so do not automatically assume that the assigned text will suffice. Analysis of supplemental texts should follow the same guidelines and heuristics as in the traditional ID4T model.

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Create and Specify Learning Activities and Media

It is unlikely that the activities or media will be pre-specified and if they are it will be important to carefully and critically evaluate whether they will work in your own classroom with your own learners. Assuming that they are not pre-specified you should carefully consider your learning activities and media for novelty, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and so forth, in much the same way as you would in the traditional model.

Plan for Implementation

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In the standards-based classroom, administrative support is among the most critical issues associated with implementation. If you are deviating from the prescribed program in any way, it will be important to make these changes clear to the administration and parents as well, particularly to the extent that the standard is a high stakes standard. Where children's progress to the next grade or high school graduation is on the line, it will be imperative that care be taken with parent communication and administrative support if you are deviating from the provided standards plan in any way. If the standards are not very detailed in their pre-specification of activities and media, it will be important to communicate to parents and administrators what your plan is for reaching those standards. Because of the political nature of standards and the broad nature of implementation planning, planning for implementation in the case of standards will involve extending beyond the classroom to communicate with outside populations.

Trying Out the Instruction, Evaluating and Revising It

If there is any possibility of trying out the instruction prior to full group implementation, that is definitely advisable. Particularly in the case where you are in a high stakes testing situation, trying it out with a similar group of learners will have significant benefit and will likely be worth the extra time required in this case. Revising from the trials

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will follow naturally. Standards do tend to remain the same from year to year (with some unfortunate exceptions) and so if it is not possible or feasible to try out the instruction in a small group prior to full implementation, it will be important to try to look at serious formative evaluation in the first implementation so that the next year will see improved instruction. Formal formative evaluation is preferred if at all possible with surveys, test item analyses, and interviews/group discussions.

Standards are perhaps among the more pervasive innovations taking place in schools today. Using the traditional ID model for the creation of learning in standards-based classrooms takes a few twists and turns. Satchwell & Loepp (2002) conclude that standards should really be about measurement, problem-solving, and communications. They suggest that teachers begin with the standards as a framework for the curriculum and then work through the obstacles and barriers from lack of planning time to facilities, to parent communication, and ask administration for help in that process.

*A Case of ID for Teachers in a
Standards-Based Classroom*

Mrs. Sada loved teaching ever since she could remember. Even as a little girl she would line up her dollies and teach them to read. When she did her student teaching she simply fell in love with the experience of teaching 8th and 9th graders. The children were wonderful young people. She found them to be delightful and loved stimulating young minds. Sure, at times they were a little out of line, distant, even defiant at moments, but that was all part of the age. She had learned to accept the changes that her learners went through, and even worked hard to keep up with the latest trends to relate to them, but lately the weight of the No Child Left Behind mandate had been getting her down. What it had meant primarily was a lot more testing for the kids, and in general time spent testing wasn't time spent really working with the kids. Her teaching life was all chopped up into little pieces and this NCLB testing was definitely making that feeling worse. She only got to see her students for about an hour (50 minutes to be precise) each day before the bell rang and they moved on to another part of the learning

factory to have their geometry or language arts widgets turned. She taught technology to the middle schoolers. But this was a place where there were plenty of standards because 8th grade in particular was the year that technology standards were assessed for NCLB. So she'd decided to focus her attention on one of the standards each month and try to work through what the standards would mean for her classes. She knew that the basic legislation specified that each student needed to be "technologically literate" by the end of 8th grade. And she had learned in the professional development session that this included everyone regardless of race, creed, gender, class, location, or disability. She felt that this last part always went without saying. She sat back down again with the large tome that was the "standards translated." That's what they called it. It was someone's attempt to specify the standards and how they could be met. But she'd all but thrown the book out at first when she'd tried a few of the lessons and found them to be horribly lacking in almost all areas. Still it was a resource, at least it offered a nice list of the standards for 8th grade. Most of them were simply too broad, she recognized. They said things like "students will master all productivity tools," or "students will demonstrate mastery of technology." That one always got her, well, obviously that was her job, but this broad sort of goal was about all she got from the book in the end.

She focused on one standard that she thought maybe she could make a little more sense of. It was "Students use technology tools to process data and report results." The lesson translation had used the SPSS computer program which was far too advanced a software tool to really work well with this age, she thought, so she scrapped that idea. She had to start from the beginning. OK, she already had the end goal in mind here from the standard (*goal*). She started down the path of which software program to use. At first she thought she might be heading in the wrong direction, specifying the media first. She tended to do that. She suspected it was a hazard of her particular job interest in technology. But then she looked again at the statement, well it actually said to use technology, but which technology and how? She took a deep breath and forged on with a focus on breaking that rather large goal into more manageable pieces instead of looking at the delivery mode. She knew that there was a lot of work in math on



Figure 7.1 ID4T can be used with traditional standards approaches

graphing, so she headed down the hall to Mr. Edward's classroom. He was in, also bent over some planning or grading task. They chatted briefly and Mrs. Sada came away with a bit more clarity about what was going on in the math classroom that could help her reach this goal in the latter part of the year. She looked again at the goal and realized it was really two goals: process data and report results. She rewrote the goal as "Students will use technology to report results." She knew that this meant results of prior data processing. Then she broke this large goal into bar graphs, pie charts, and descriptive words and she created learning objectives for each of those (*objectives*). She decided that to really meet this standard she'd need to see her students' final products such as pie charts, bar charts, etc. But given the standard and the goal, perhaps she'd want to see their products as well as their process—how they got the products to the end point. She created a brief rubric that included specific quality check items for the products

such as “pie chart accurately reflects data,” “bar chart employs appropriate use of color to best reflect results.” She also included process items in the rubric, such as “student can open the software and select appropriate tool,” or “observed student using technology to build pie chart” (*testing*).

Mrs. Sada knew that the kids had been charting things since kindergarten. Everything from favorite colors to complex data collection in the community had taken place in elementary school. But putting that together with the technology was what this standard was really all about. She thought it might be a good idea to put together a survey to find out what the learners already knew about charting and Excel (her likely choice of technology/media delivery), but decided against it. She simply didn't have the time to get into it. She decided instead to do a quick check with the class orally at the start of the session (*prerequisite*). She knew it wasn't ideal to rely on her informal knowledge of the group for her understanding of learner characteristics and prerequisite levels, but it would have to do this time.

She knew that this standard was covered in the text she was already using in her class, and figured she'd probably use it, but she did review several others to see if they had really good ideas or material that she'd want to use. After reviewing, she landed back with the original text (*text*). Still trying to avoid determining her media specifically but knowing that technology had to be used somehow, Mrs. Sada took some time to specify some activities that she thought would be useful. The students already knew about how to collect data and had been doing so for some years, and they knew (most of them) how to array data in some charts, but none knew how to do this using Excel which was introduced in her class. She ended up violating a major rule by deciding that she'd use Excel as her media (*media*) prior to deciding precisely what activities she'd use, but those fell quickly into place once she had decided about Excel (*activities*). She had simply no time to try it out with anyone even close to the population, so she simply tried it out in her class live and discovered several issues associated with the technology (*implementation*) and her rubric which she improved (*evaluation/iterative improvement/revision*). In the end, Mrs. Sada felt pretty good about the ways that her skills in ID had helped her navigate the standards.

What You Can Do Now (Chapter Summary)

At this point you will probably be able to:

- Describe what standards-based learning is and its relationship to your own practice and your own classroom.
- List the critical components of the standards-based classroom.
- Explain the ways in which the ID4T model can work with the standards-based classroom.
- Describe a lesson you use that is standards based and how you might work with the ID4T model.

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